

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the reasons that follow. Claims 1-14 were and remain pending in the present application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier. Claims 1, 13 and 14 have been amended.

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the courtesies extended to Applicant's undersigned representative by Examiner Nguyen during a telephone interview conducted on March 12, 2004. During the interview, Applicant distinguished the claimed invention from the cited prior art references. In order to more clearly distinguish the invention from the cited references, Applicant and Examiner agreed to the amendments set forth herein to claims 1, 13 and 14. The Examiner agreed that in view of the arguments already of record and the amendments to the claims described above, the claims were allowable over the prior art of record.

The Examiner further agreed that since the U.S.P.T.O. had misplaced Applicant's reply dated December 31, 2003, and that such error necessitated the three-month extension of time for filing the RCE accompanying the present amendment, that Applicant would not be required to pay the fee for the three-month extension of time or that such fee, if deducted from Applicant's deposit account, would be ultimately refunded. In connection with this, the Examiner agreed that there would be an adjustment to the time calculations in this case to account for the delay at the PTO.

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date



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